

Products containing aluminium should be avoided because aluminium can accumulate in kidney impairment and can cause toxic side effects.

Products containing calcium or magnesium have to be used with caution as these ingredients may already be contained in other prescribed medicine (eg in phosphate binders) and because the levels of these electrolytes need to be closely monitored in kidney impairment. Please discuss with your doctor or pharmacist if you wish to use a calcium or magnesium-containing product.

Ranitidine, famotidine, nizatidine and omeprazole can be bought for short-term relief of heartburn. However, they may be similar to medicine already prescribed so please check with your pharmacist first.

Some indigestion remedies cannot be taken at the same time as some transplant medicine, so check with your pharmacist before taking.

Constipation

Senna and sodium docusate are suitable for use in all stages of kidney impairment (however these should be avoided if you have an intestinal obstruction). Lactulose and glycerine suppositories are also suitable options. Movicol can also be used. Although Movicol has to be made up in a large amount of water, this volume does not count towards your daily fluid restriction because Movicol draws this water into the bowel. Fybogel should be avoided.

Products containing phosphate or sodium picosulphate should be avoided.

If constipation is persistent, please discuss with your doctor particularly if you are on peritoneal dialysis as constipation can affect the efficiency of dialysis.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea results in fluid loss and can cause dehydration. If the diarrhoea is severe, please seek advice from your doctor. If the symptoms are mild (and are not due to a stomach bug/food poisoning) loperamide (Imodium) can be used.

Oral rehydration solutions are best avoided (unless advised by a doctor) because they contain sodium and potassium. Patients on peritoneal dialysis should be aware that diarrhoea can be an early sign of peritonitis and should seek advice from their peritoneal dialysis unit if concerned.

Patients taking the transplant drug tacrolimus should seek medical advice as diarrhoea can increase the tacrolimus level.

Muscle aches and pains

Paracetamol can be used to treat pain. External remedies such as Deep Heat can be applied to muscle aches as directed. Avoid taking any tablet or using any creams, ointments, gels etc containing ibuprofen, diclofenac, ketoprofen, aspirin (see under pain), naproxen, salicylic acid or piroxicam. If unsure, please ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Smoking cessation

Generally all smoking cessation products are safe to use, but if you have severe kidney impairment seek advice because metabolites may accumulate and a lower dose may be advised.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

These are not necessary unless advised by a doctor or renal dietitian. In particular, vitamin A and supplements containing vitamin A (eg cod liver oil) should be avoided. Avoid high doses (eg doses higher than 1000mg a day) of ascorbic acid (vitamin C). Vitamin D should be taken only if advised by a doctor or renal dietitian.

Herbal/complementary preparations

Very few herbal medicines have been studied in kidney impairment and are best avoided even if the preparation claims it can help with kidney function because:

- herbal preparations can interact with prescription medications
- some herbs need the kidneys to eliminate them from the body and so can accumulate to dangerous levels in patients with kidney impairment
- some herbal preparations can cause kidney irritation or damage
- some herbal preparations can affect blood pressure
- some contain minerals that can be harmful to kidney patients (eg potassium, phosphate)
- some herbs have been linked to causing kidney impairment and cancer
- herbal preparations are subject to contamination
- the government does not regulate herbal supplements which means the exact contents, purity, safety and effectiveness are not known.

Remember: Just because a product is “natural” does not mean it is safe (especially for kidney patients). Please seek advice from your doctor or pharmacist before using any herbal or complimentary supplement.

Other points to remember:

- it is very important to inform your doctor or pharmacist about your kidney condition and the medicines you are currently taking
- medicines that you can buy over the counter may:
 - be similar to medicines you are already taking
 - interact with your current medicine
 - be unsuitable to take with your condition so always first check with your doctor or pharmacist.

If your symptoms persist for more than a few days, or get worse, seek the advice of your doctor.

Coughs and colds

Cough and cold medicines that contain decongestants (such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine) may increase blood pressure, so patients with high blood pressure should avoid these if possible. (Many cough and cold preparations contain pain killers and so please also refer to the pain section).

Some cough medicine can be high in potassium (which should be avoided) so check with your pharmacist before buying. Cough mixtures containing guaifenesin or dextromethorphan should also be avoided.

Suitable remedies include paracetamol, Simple Linctus, glycerine and honey lozenges and steam inhalation with menthol or Olbas Oil (please take care with hot water).

Hay fever

Some antihistamine tablets are available to buy for treating hayfever (eg, cetirizine, loratadine, chlorphenamine). These medicines are generally safe to take in all stages of kidney impairment, however, care should be taken as you may be more affected by the sedative effects. You should also discuss with your pharmacist before taking as you may already be prescribed an antihistamine tablet for another reason (eg, chlorphenamine, cyclizine, hydroxyzine, desloratadine, fexofenadine are antihistamines commonly prescribed for nausea and for itching). In these cases, an additional antihistamine tablet should not be taken. Other hayfever products, such as nasal sprays and eye drops, can be used. If you are unsure, please ask your pharmacist.

Indigestion

Gaviscon liquid and tablets can be used for occasional treatment of indigestion but Gaviscon Advance is best avoided because it is high in potassium.

Pain (headaches etc)

- Paracetamol – Paracetamol is safe to use at the recommended dose in all stages of kidney impairment. As paracetamol is also contained in other products (such as cold remedies) care should be taken not to exceed the overall maximum dose. Dissolvable tablets are best avoided if possible because they contain sodium and contribute to your fluid intake.
- Aspirin – All products containing aspirin should be avoided except the low once-daily dose aspirin (75-150mg) which is commonly prescribed to help thin the blood. Aspirin at higher doses (above 150mg) can further damage impaired kidneys. You may also be more prone to the stomach problems that aspirin can cause.
- NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, naproxen, indometacin, ketoprofen, diclofenac). All products containing any of these ingredients should be avoided because these can further damage impaired kidneys. You may also be more prone to the stomach problems these medicines can cause. NSAIDs can also interact with the anti-rejection medicines used post-transplant. If you are unsure if a particular product contains any of these ingredients, please ask your pharmacist.
- Codeine – Codeine (up to 10mg per tablet) is okay to use at the recommended dose in all stages of kidney impairment. However, you may be more prone to the side effects of codeine (particularly drowsiness) and so care should be taken. Products that contain more than 10mg codeine per tablet should be discussed with your doctor before taking.

Concerns or complaints

If you have any concerns or worries about your care please contact the department responsible. However, if you are unable to resolve your concerns or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Integrated PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service), Complaints and Litigation Service on 01206 745926 or ask any member of staff for a leaflet, which will describe how you may make a complaint.

Your views

If you or a family member has recently been in either Colchester General Hospital or Essex County Hospital for any reason, you can tell us about your experience by visiting the www.nhs.uk website and then click on the "Comments" section, or you can write to the address on the front of this leaflet or email your comments to info@colchesterhospital.nhs.uk

Medication for the treatment of minor ailments in patients with kidney impairment

Ailment	Recommended	Avoid	Comments
Headache	Paracetamol	Aspirin Ibuprofen (or similar – see page 4)	Avoid dissolvable preparations if possible
Colds and coughs	Paracetamol Simple linctus Some throat lozenges	Decongestants Aspirin Ibuprofen (or similar – see pages 4) Cough preparations that contain potassium, guaifenesin or dextromethorphan	Steam inhalation may help congestion
Hayfever	Antihistamines (if not already taking a similar medicine)		Hayfever nasal sprays and eye drops may also be effective
Indigestion	Gaviscon	Gaviscon Advance Aluminium containing products	Products containing calcium and/or magnesium may be suitable

Why should there be different advice for kidney patients?

Great care should always be taken when obtaining OTC medicines, but especially for patients who have kidney conditions because:

- some can interact with other medicines (particularly medicines commonly prescribed for kidney conditions and transplants)
- many medicines (including OTC medicines) are eliminated by the kidneys. When kidney function is impaired, the medicine may build up in the body to a dangerous level (as it is not being eliminated). The dose of the OTC medicine may therefore need to be taken differently to the dose usually advised
- some can further damage the impaired kidney
- some can affect medical conditions such as blood pressure, diabetes and heart conditions that have a secondary impact on the kidney
- some can affect electrolytes (such as potassium, sodium and aluminium) which need to be tightly controlled in kidney conditions
- some might do a similar job to your prescribed medicine so the two should not be taken together.

It is therefore important for everyone with a kidney condition to be careful and to seek advice before taking any OTC medicine.

Introduction

An over-the-counter medicine (OTC) is a medicine that can be bought without a prescription. OTC medicines are sold from pharmacies, supermarkets, local stores etc and include preparations such as tablets, capsules, creams, suppositories, inhalers, eye drops, powders and complementary therapies.

This leaflet provides general information for adult kidney patients on the treatment of minor ailments where an OTC medicine is often used. This is a guide only and is not comprehensive. (Please note, it may be necessary for a patient to take a medicine that is not recommended in this leaflet if advised by a doctor).

This information is for patients with kidney conditions only and is not suitable for patients who also have liver failure.

As with all self-treated conditions, if your symptoms persist for a few days you should seek the advice of your doctor.

Constipation	Senna Sodium docusate Lactulose Glycerin suppositories	Sodium picosulphate Phosphate containing products Fybogel	Movicol is a suitable alternative Contact your doctor if symptoms persist
Diarrhoea	Loperamide	Oral rehydrating solutions	If severe, contact your doctor
Muscle aches and pains	Paracetamol Deep Heat	Ibuprofen or similar – (see page 7 in tablets, creams or ointments)	
Smoking cessation	Nicotine products		Caution in severe kidney impairment
Vitamins	Not necessary (unless advised by a doctor or renal dietitian)	Vitamin A Cod liver oil High dose Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)	Only take vitamin D if prescribed by a doctor

Over-the-counter medicines for patients with kidney conditions

Renal Unit
Primary Care Centre
Turner Road
Colchester
CO4 5JR

Tel: 01206 286630

Please ask if this
leaflet is required in
an alternative format

Leaflet number	1274n2
Created	December 2012
Reviewed	December 2014
Next review	December 2016

Kind
Caring
Welcoming

Involving
Communication
Responsive

Professional
Consistency
Be the difference

at our
best.